

Statecraft in the Middle East

Americans are hungry for an explanation of foreign policy that makes sense. They certainly want to know what happened in Iraq and what went wrong. Even more importantly, they want to know whether the United States can fix its foreign policy more generally and what it will take to do it.

The starting point is with statecraft and its main essentials: being clear on objectives and matching them to our means. It sounds simple, and it is certainly logical. Yet today, as we survey the world and our biggest challenges internationally, we tend to find a wide gap between objectives and means. Why? Is it so difficult to identify objectives that can be linked to means?

It should not be, but all too often, our objectives tend to be at a high level of generality and not grounded in reality. Listen to President George W. Bush today on the three principal challenges in the Middle East—Iraq, Iran, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—and what do you hear? On Iraq, the president's objective is probably to achieve stability, but he speaks in terms of succeeding and having Iraq become our partner in the war on terrorism. On Iran, he continues to call attention to the grave danger Iran represents, and his objective is to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. On the Israelis and Palestinians, Bush has declared that he is confident we will reach a peace treaty this year.

All may sound reasonable, but do the circumstances make them achievable? If so, do we (or others with whom we may be able to cooperate) have the means to achieve them? Furthermore, even if individually or collectively we may have the means, do we have a strategy for employing these means effectively to meet the objectives? Statecraft requires seeing the world as it is, not

Dennis Ross is the Ziegler Distinguished Fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. This article is excerpted from the forthcoming paperback edition of *Statecraft: And How to Restore America's Standing in the World* (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, July 2008).

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as we might like it to be. We do not have to give up our ambition, nor should we. We can still be determined to transform unacceptable realities, but we have to understand them before we can change them.

Achieving Political Reconciliation in Iraq

Statecraft requires reality-based, not faith-based, assessments. Looking at our current policies on Iraq, Iran, and the Israeli-Palestinian issues, faith-based or ideologically driven assessments are shaping U.S. objectives and the means we are employing. Consider Iraq: When Bush announced the surge in January 2007, his stated objective was to create a secure enough environment in Baghdad to make it possible for the different sectarian leaders to forge political compromise. In other words, the military surge was the means being used to achieve political reconciliation. The administration even identified 18 benchmarks to indicate progress toward the achievement of this objective.

By September 2007, Bush had changed the objective from national reconciliation to local empowerment and basically dropped all of the benchmarks. In justifying this new objective, the president stated, "As local politics change, so will national politics."¹ There is nothing wrong with changing objectives; after all, objectives need to be connected to reality, and adjusting to reality is a good thing. Was, however, the president adjusting to reality? Were we now applying our means to address the larger problem in Iraq? The continuing problem in Iraq is that Shi'a and Sunnis are not building bridges or understandings between each other either at national or local levels. Until they do, it is difficult to see how the reduction in violence can be sustainable over time.

The good news about the surge is that it has improved the security situation. In no small part, it has done so because Sunnis turned against al Qaeda and we have supported them as they have done so. Nearly 90,000 Sunnis are now in Awakening Councils, in which they have assumed increasing responsibilities for local security and have been fighting al Qaeda in predominately Sunni areas. The United States is supporting these councils and paying each of the members of these local councils about \$300 a month. For the longer term, it is essential either to integrate these newly empowered Sunnis, who have been largely responsible for the improvement in security in the Anbar province, into the government's security forces or at least make sure that the Iraqi government is paying them. Notwithstanding plans to do precisely this, the central government is continuing to drag its feet on either integrating or paying them. Baghdad must take over this role.

Unfortunately, the Shi'a continue to fear that if they share power, they will lose it. They continue to suspect that the Sunnis will use their newfound power, especially military power, against them. Although those in the Awakening

Councils have certainly not expressed any great hopes for reconciliation with the Shi'a-led national government in Baghdad, they may yet be open to coexistence. Someone, however, needs to nurture it. Given the Sunni-Shi'a divide and the legacy of profound distrust, it will not simply happen on its own.

Local empowerment will not lead to a change in national politics unless there is a political strategy to produce such a change. The shortcoming of the surge is not its approach to trying to provide greater security for Iraqi population centers. The shortcoming is that there is no parallel political surge to match the military surge. There is no political equivalent to General David Petraeus. Ambassador Ryan Crocker, as skilled and professional as he is, does not command either the resources or authority to match Petraeus. Yet, what is needed now are political means to match the military means that we are now employing.

Absent that, what will happen when the United States withdraws? Locally empowered and newly armed groups will be more capable of fighting each other and will do so if the boundaries between them are not defined by any political understandings. As long as we are there with significant forces, we can separate Iraqis. One of the facets of U.S. strategy in Baghdad, along with an increased military presence, has been to build separation walls between the different sectarian neighborhoods. Maybe the administration has no expectations about any understandings and believes U.S. forces simply need to be in Iraq for another decade. The Iraqi defense minister, visiting Washington in January 2008, suggested as much.²

Maybe there is a strategy now of simply having U.S. forces stay long enough for Iraqis to get used to living with a new situation and having the forces preserve internal peace until they get that point. Is that a sustainable strategy politically in the United States? Leaving aside the likely public opposition, given the costs and uncertain eventual outcome, U.S. military leaders, including the chiefs of the Army and the Marine Corps, have consistently talked about the drain on manpower and resources that Iraq is imposing on U.S. forces.³

It may be late in Iraq, but it may not be too late to push a political surge. Either the current or a new administration could employ three means to build the necessary political understandings and achieve the objective of a "managed transition" in Iraq. First, the United States should use withdrawal, which even Bush is committed to carrying out, as a lever. We should be dealing with local groups and telling them that those who cooperate with each other will see that we withdraw where they want us to, when they want us to, and how they want us to and that they will get military and economic assets as this pro-

Statecraft requires seeing the world as it is, not as we might like it to be.

cess unfolds. Conversely, we would tell those who are not prepared to cooperate with each other that we will not withdraw where, when, or how they want us to do so. They would also lose out on the military and economic goods that go to those who cooperate. To wield such incentives and disincentives, we will need someone working actively at the local levels and will need to avoid rigid timetables for withdrawal lest we lose the necessary flexibility to use it for political purposes.

Second, we should work to convene a national reconciliation conference that brings those we are presently empowering at the local levels together

Three means could still be employed to build necessary political understandings in Iraq.

with provincial and national sectarian leaders and not allow this conference to disband until agreement has been reached. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki has called such conferences together previously, but they convene and disband in a day. Such conferences by definition are meant primarily for show, not for hammering out real understandings. Again, someone must orchestrate the convening of the meeting, work out an agenda and ground rules in advance, and then actively mediate once the conference is convened.

Third, although a regional conference on Iraq has also already been convened briefly three times, no one has sought actually to broker understandings between Iraq's neighbors. Yet, all of Iraq's neighbors, including Iran and Saudi Arabia, have reason to fear a vacuum in Iraq that could lead to an endless and very expensive competition among them. As long as we are there, we keep the lid on in a way that makes it safe for everyone inside and outside Iraq to avoid difficult choices. Here again, withdrawal can be a lever if deployed with political purposes in mind. Under the umbrella of the regional conference, why not try to play on the interests of Iran and Saudi Arabia (and Jordan, Syria, and Turkey) to broker understandings at least on how to contain violence within Iraq so that it is not only more limited but also does not spill across borders? If nothing else, the Iranians know that the Saudis can finance the Sunni tribes to limit the Iranian interests in Iraq, and the Saudis know that the Iranians can insinuate themselves further in southern Iraq in a way that could be threatening to the Saudis. Such mutual fears can be a source of U.S. leverage either for supporting internal efforts to reach understandings between the Shi'a and Sunnis or for containing conflict within Iraq.

Clearly, means could be tied to a relevant objective in Iraq. Yet, it will take a high-powered, very senior-level political official—a political “four-star general”—to orchestrate the three parallel sets of negotiations that need to

occur at the local, national, and international levels. Because this administration either will not or cannot do this, the next U.S. president should. Bear in mind that Bush's successor will be in a position to justify a new approach. A new political surge could be what our next president announces early, and he or she need not surrender leverage in the process. Withdrawal can be a form of leverage if it is not governed by too rigid a timetable. It is time we actually applied leverage, the essence of statecraft, in Iraq.

What Is Possible on Iran?

Iran has vulnerabilities that can be exploited, especially its economic weaknesses, the divisions within the Iranian leadership, and the concerns of those in the elite worried about the potentially high cost of pursuing nuclear weapons. Although everyone in the Iranian leadership wants nuclear status, not everyone agrees on pursuing it at any price, certainly not if it isolates Iran and cuts off its capacity to use its oil revenues to continue to maintain social peace internally.

Although Iran's vulnerabilities remain, something significant has changed: the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iran's nuclear intentions and capabilities.⁴ Publicly released on December 3, 2007, it transformed the international political landscape. Here were all the intelligence agencies of the U.S. government saying that Iran had suspended its covert nuclear weapons program in 2003. By headlining the weapons program and saying that it had been suspended, it left the impression that there was no immediate threat. If there was no immediate threat, why pursue sanctions? Why build pressure on Iran? Why should all options, including the military, be on the table?

There was irony in the NIE's judgments. Iran had not been sanctioned by the UN Security Council for a covert nuclear weapons program. Rather, it had been sanctioned by the Security Council for its uranium-enrichment activities, which could lead to a nuclear weapons capability. The difficult part of developing nuclear weapons is being able to fashion the industrial capacity, engineering know-how, and very expensive infrastructure to produce the fissionable material out of which a bomb is made. The least costly, least demanding, and least time-consuming part is to be able to weaponize that material once you can stockpile it.

The NIE was clear that Iran was continuing in a determined way to develop enriched uranium and the means to produce fissionable material, but the weapons part of this effort had been put on hold. Again, the irony: Iran had put this part of the program on hold because of outside pressures. In the NIE's words, Iran stopped its weapons program in 2003 "primarily in response to international pressures," which "indicates Tehran's decisions are guided by

a cost-benefit approach.”⁵ Yet, the NIE, by framing its judgments in a way that emphasizes the covert nuclear weapons program rather than the overt enrichment activities, has largely reduced the ability of the international community to apply pressure to Iran.

After the NIE’s release, the interest in adopting additional sanctions against Iran has largely dissipated. Pre-NIE, Russia and China were ready to adopt a third UN Security Council sanctions resolution. Post-NIE, they were hesitant and were willing to go along with the third resolution (Resolution 1803) only four months later and only as long as it did not touch the Iranian economy. Pre-NIE, President Nicolas Sarkozy of France was pushing for harsher EU-wide economic sanctions on Iran that would go well beyond anything contemplated at the United Nations. He was doing so on the grounds that anything less would fail and inevitably make it more likely that force might be the only alternative available to prevent Iran from going nuclear. Post-NIE, his posture has become softer as it was more difficult to make this case credibly. Pre-NIE, the Saudis had gone public, pressuring Iran to adopt a Gulf Cooperation Council proposal to have all uranium enrichment for the Middle East done outside the region by an international consortium. Post-NIE, the Saudis dropped any mention of the proposal.

This was hardly the Bush administration’s intent. Even after the NIE, the president declared that “Iran was dangerous, Iran is dangerous, and Iran will be dangerous if they have the knowledge necessary to make a nuclear weapon.”⁶ The last thing he wanted to do was take pressure off Iran. Yet, in a fundamental failure of how to do elementary statecraft, his administration allowed the framing of the issue to be transformed by the NIE.

NIEs are rarely published, if ever. It was the president’s decision to publish the Iranian NIE. To be sure, there was an expectation that once this NIE was briefed to the intelligence oversight committees in Congress, its key findings would be leaked, and the administration wanted to get out in front of it. This is understandable, but the White House’s efforts were inept. Instead of rushing the publication of the NIE, which the intelligence community had no expectation that it would be asked to do, the administration could have held off on this decision and also asked the community not to brief Congress until it had time to coordinate with the British, French, and Germans. These three states have taken the lead on the Iranian issue, both in drafting sanctions resolutions and in negotiating with Iran.

It was important not to blindside them, and it was essential to coordinate with them on how to present the findings of the NIE publicly. Unfortunately, this was not done. Once the Europeans had the chance to discuss the meaning of the NIE, they were far clearer in presenting the problem as enrichment and the continuing need to stop it than the Bush administration had been.

The administration's presentation was muddled, initially trying to focus on how the NIE had vindicated its policies of pressure rather than addressing the enrichment issue, which was the reason for sanctions in the first place. Had even a small degree of statecraft been employed, the United States would have coordinated a message with the Europeans, and the issue-framing would have been vastly improved. Instead, Foreign Minister David Miliband of the United Kingdom had to quickly craft an excellent article in the *Financial Times* shortly after the NIE's release had already captured the headlines.⁷

So, is it now hopeless to alter Iran's behavior on the nuclear issue? Although the NIE has reduced the potential for exercising leverage, it has not removed it. Iran's vulnerabilities remain. Its oil output is declining as its internal consumption is rising, leaving Iran with less oil for export. That export is critical for Iran's domestic expenditures. Eighty-five percent of Iran's export earnings come from its oil exports, and those revenues constitute one-half of the Iranian government's monies.⁸ Without very significant technical help from the outside, Iran will not be able to prevent a decline in oil production from existing fields, and without massive investment and technology transfer from the outside, it will not be able to explore and exploit new oil and natural gas fields.

The more pressure put on Chinese, European, Japanese, and South Korean companies not to do business with Iran unless it changes its behavior, the more the Iranian government will have to make difficult choices. The Iranian economy is suffering from severe mismanagement and the misguided policies of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whom at least one very senior cleric has criticized for "heavy blows to the Iranian [economic] system."⁹ Ahmadinejad promised to bring the oil revenues to every table. Instead, he has brought rationing of gasoline, high inflation, high unemployment, a home-heating crisis (given a shortage of available natural gas), and international isolation.

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Although the UN Security Council sanctions have not touched the Iranian economy directly, unilateral U.S. sanctions have raised international fears about the risks of doing business in Iran. As a result, they have reduced investment from the outside, inhibited Iranian access to credit, and dramatically raised commodity prices in the country.¹⁰ In the critical oil and natural gas sectors of the economy, there were no firm contracts concluded for exploring new offshore or onshore blocks for two and a half years following Ahmadinejad's ascension to the presidency.

Only in December 2007, after the NIE was released, were the first Iranian oil and natural gas contracts finally concluded with Chinese, Italian, and

The next president should announce a new political surge for Iraq.

Malaysian companies.¹¹ These developments could signal that more companies will begin to invest in Iran, but the vulnerabilities remain and could be exploited. The problem, of course, is that economic pressures to date have not altered Iran's behavior; and the means that the Bush administration has been trying to apply, particularly in the post-NIE environment, are unlikely to achieve the objective of stopping Iran from going nuclear.

Could a different strategy with a different mix of pressures and inducements change the Iranian calculus? Perhaps, but the key is to pursue a strategy that

The NIE has reduced the potential for exercising leverage on Iran, but it has not removed it.

raises the costs that would matter to the Iranian leadership while showing Iran's leaders that there is a way for Iran to gain by giving up the nuclear program, at least as currently constituted. In other words, our objective and means can be married, but that will require something other than the current U.S. pressure-only approach. Even assuming that the United States could ratchet up the economic pressure, the Iranian leadership is unlikely to accept an outcome that leaves them humiliated and perceived as having been defeated. They must also be able to show that they have gained by altering their approach on the nuclear issue to meet the concerns of the international community.

What is required, therefore, is a new mix of pressures and inducements. The third UN Security Council resolution is too weak to add to pressures on Iran, and unilateral U.S. sanctions, having made European and other businesses more wary, have probably also done as much as they are likely to do. Although the credit guarantees that European countries have provided to their companies have been cut back, those guarantees still amount to billions of euros. It is pretty difficult to convince the Iranians that their economic life-line is really going to be cut as long as credit guarantees are still available and European companies are still seeking to invest.

European hesitancy in cutting back further is driven not only by the sense of economic loss but also by the reality that Chinese companies tend to take the place of European businesses that might back away. At this point, Europeans might be more willing to apply additional economic pressures if they knew that China would not take advantage of such actions. If the United States wants to affect both the Europeans and Chinese and have a far more dramatic affect on the Iranians in the process, it needs to persuade the Saudis to exert the leverage it has on both.

We are not taking advantage of the Saudi interest in preventing Iran from going nuclear. The Saudis, after the NIE, may be wary of openly challenging

Iran, believing that tactic could be increasingly risky with an Iran that already seems emboldened, but their fears about the Iranian nuclear program have not changed. If the Saudis go privately to the European banks, investment houses, and energy companies and tell them that if they do business with Iran, they will lose the possibility of doing business in Saudi Arabia, that could have a big effect. With China, they could basically say that it is time to make a choice: they can do business either with Saudi Arabia or Iran. China's stakes in Saudi Arabia, with major investments in the Saudi petrochemical industry, joint developments in refineries, and Saudi Arabia filling China's strategic petroleum reserve in China, dwarf those it has in Iran. Forced to make a choice, Beijing probably would choose Riyadh. Now, not having to do so, China will follow its largely mercantilist instincts and deal with both.

Would the Saudis force such a choice? They would only do so if they became convinced that the United States and others actually have a strategy and that their steps are an important piece of it. We will need to explain to the Saudis how such action will ratchet up pressure on Iran and what we will and will not do to reach a deal with the Iranians. The Saudis have concerns about our being too forthcoming with Iran, but they also fear the possibility of the use of force against Iran that proves messy, drags on for a long time, and makes them the target of Iranian retaliation. Our readiness to spell out a strategy of pressure and inducements and the likelihood that force may have to be used if there is no increased pressure on Iran will be a necessary part of convincing the Saudis to use their financial clout with the Europeans and the Chinese.

The same approach will be required with the Europeans, who also fear the use of force. The NIE created the impression that the United States was no longer in a position to use force against Iran. Ironically, that could make it more likely that the Israelis, now no longer believing that the international community will prevent Iran from going nuclear and still convinced that Iran is determined to possess such weapons, will feel compelled to use force against Iran's nuclear facilities. Here, there would be value in having the Israelis go quietly to key European governments and explain that even if the Europeans may think that they can live with an Iran with nuclear weapons, Israel, facing an existential threat, cannot. The Israelis could say that if the Europeans do not raise pressures on Iran, the Israeli government will know that it will be left with no choice but to take its own steps to set back the Iranian nuclear program.

That is likely to concentrate European minds on the need to ratchet up pressure on Iran. Unless tied to the prospect of getting Tehran to agree to change its behavior, however, there is likely to be a limit on how much Europe will actually do. The United States therefore needs to make its own offer to the Europeans. The lead EU negotiators with Iran appear to believe that a

deal is possible with Iran only if the United States is also at the table. According to the Europeans, Iran seeks economic and political goods from them, but the big prize for Tehran is having Washington accept the Iranian regime and its place and interests in the Middle East.

It matters less whether the Europeans are correct. What matters is that they believe that a U.S. presence at the negotiating table opens up the possibility of concluding a deal with Iran. Therefore, why not trade on that as well? Why not go to the Europeans and say that we will drop our condition on Iran suspending uranium enrichment for us to come to the table, provided Europe cuts off all economic credits and investment in the Iranian oil and natural gas sector and all ties to Iranian banks? We would be doing the essence of statecraft: giving the Europeans something they want—us at the negotiating table—in return for asking them to do something that is difficult for them—cutting their economic lifeline to Iran.

Even if the current administration does not take this approach and Iran has advanced its nuclear developments by January 2009, the dangers of an Iran with nuclear weapons will not have changed, and trying to prevent it will have to be one of the next president's top foreign policy priorities. This strategy should be implemented at that time.

The Israelis and Palestinians

Although affecting the realities on the ground is important if there is to be any hope of making real progress on settling the core issues of the conflict—Jerusalem, refugees, borders, and security—the administration's focus has been far greater on generating a political horizon or political endgame than on trying to alter the realities of day-to-day life for Palestinians and Israelis.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice felt, particularly after Hamas's seizure of Gaza in June 2007, that if she could produce a political horizon in which both sides could see the outlines of the final agreement, President Mahmoud Abbas would be able to show that the Palestinian Authority could achieve Palestinian national aspirations and that Hamas could not, producing, in her eyes, a means to undercut Hamas's political base among Palestinians.

Unfortunately, this approach has three basic weaknesses. First, if daily realities for Palestinians remain bad and unchanged—they cannot move because of Israeli checkpoints and the economy is depressed—why are they going to believe grand promises about what they will get at some point in the future? Second, for Israelis, there is no reason to remove checkpoints if Palestinians are not acting against terrorism and even less reason to make far-reaching, existential concessions on Jerusalem and borders if Hamas can prevent their implementation and may yet take over even in the West Bank. Third, even if the leaders on

both sides, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Abbas, are serious about wanting to negotiate the core issues, their capacity to concede on them is limited as long as their publics are cynical and disbelieve the potential for peace.

This is why affecting the realities that shape the day-to-day perceptions of both publics is so important. This takes a strategy and means tied to more achievable objectives. It takes statecraft, not stagecraft—the staging of events designed to create a certain image. Stagecraft can be useful for capturing attention and changing psychology. It can help create momentum for a policy, but it cannot be the policy. Stagecraft can be a prop to support statecraft but cannot substitute for it.

The November 2007 conference in Annapolis was an example of stagecraft. To embody statecraft, it had to be prepared substantially, and there had to be a “day after” strategy. The administration did neither. The Annapolis meeting launched formal negotiations on permanent status, but there was no agreed basis for the negotiations. If the administration was going to invite nearly 50 nations to participate, would it not have made sense to enshrine some “Annapolis principles” that all embraced as guiding the process? To be sure, that would have taken an intense diplomatic effort to produce, but then the conference could have been something more than only an event. It could have been a historical development in which all the participants established their commitment to a two-state solution and agreed to the principles for achieving it.

Instead, the Annapolis event was “the mother of all photo-ops,” in the words of one the Israeli participants.¹² Even that could have been of some utility if it was then used to launch a new beginning. Yet, that necessitated accomplishing something very quickly after the conference to show that this was a real departure and life was now going to change. Here was the opportunity to give the Israeli and Palestinian publics a reason to take a second look at peacemaking. Polls showed that each public was supportive of going to Annapolis but highly skeptical as to whether anything would come of it.¹³ Their support showed that they were paying attention; the parties needed to capitalize on that support to produce immediate changes that could be seen and felt.

For Palestinians, why were there no plans to generate large numbers of jobs in a sector such as housing construction immediately after the Annapolis conference? Similarly, why was no plan to improve commerce for the Palestinians set in motion prior to the conference and realized immediately afterward? (Employing technology at crossing points controlled by the Israelis could have eased the movement of goods and materials and need not have required the Is-

To affect both Europe and China on Iran, the United States needs help from the Saudis.

The realities of day-to-day life need to be altered for Palestinians and Israelis.

raelis to take security risks by lifting checkpoints on the movement of people.) Had such steps been planned and developed in advance, Palestinians would have at least noticed that there were unmistakable economic improvements after the Annapolis meeting. In an economy in which per capita income has dropped more than 40 percent since the beginning of the intifada in 2000, this would have provided an important psychological lift.¹⁴

Instead, what Palestinians saw on the ground were no changes economically or in mobility after the Annapolis conference. Although a donors conference was held in Paris two weeks after the conference, in which large amounts of assistance were pledged to the Palestinian Authority (\$7.7 billion worth of primarily projects),¹⁵ none of those projects are likely to materialize any time soon,

and there is already grumbling about what has happened to the money.

Palestinians were not alone in not seeing anything. Israelis too saw business as usual on the issue that matters most to them: three Israelis were killed in two separate terrorist attacks in the West Bank in the first two months after the conference. In each case, those responsible for the murders were connected to the Palestinian security forces. Although not authorized by those forces, the Israelis saw no great readiness on the part of the Palestinian security forces to admit who had been responsible until the Israelis approached the security forces with their own information. As one senior Israeli defense official said to me, "What has changed?"¹⁶ Palestinians asked me the same question. Notwithstanding Rice's declaration that we would work with the parties to implement their phase-one obligations in the road map, obligations that required the Israelis to ease their security grip on the territories and Palestinians to act against terrorism and to begin dismantling terrorist infrastructure, nothing has actually happened.

The gap between rhetorical goals and practical realities is growing and rendering the achievement of a peace treaty impossible by January 2009. Truth be told, it was not going to be possible given the gaps between the parties, the disbelief of the two publics, and the Israeli military's conviction that the lessons of the last seven years and the increase of threats coming from Hizballah and Hamas rockets makes their security demands far greater than they were previously. From that standpoint, the administration's objective was once again shaped by a faith-based assessment of the circumstances, not a reality-based assessment.

Yet, a reality-based assessment does not need to lead to paralysis and passivity. There is something to work with: two leaders who, for the first time since

the 1993 Oslo accords, actually believe in each other's genuine commitment to reaching peace. That each is politically weak and surrounded by those far more skeptical of trying to resolve the core issues, even at a level of generality, does not militate against meaningful progress in 2008.

So, what objectives make sense this year? The key is to focus on reestablishing enough belief in each public that Olmert and Abbas can feel more empowered to reach agreement on the trade-offs on the core issues at least at a level of principle or generality. The Israelis must accept that if they must have Palestinian concessions on the right of return, security, and settlement blocs in modified borders, they have to respond to Palestinian needs on Jerusalem and borders. In turn, Palestinians must accept that, to get what they need on Jerusalem and borders—a capital in the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem for the Palestinian state and borders that are based on the 1967 lines with modifications and swaps of territory—they must agree that Palestinian refugees will return to their own state, not to Israel, and address Israeli security concerns practically, not just rhetorically.

The November 2007 Annapolis conference was an example of stagecraft, not statecraft.

Although simple to say, for each side to agree to this, even at a level of principle, requires both sides to take on history and mythology. Each must confront their core narratives and be prepared to compromise on what they have historically said that they cannot compromise—namely, Jerusalem for Israelis and refugees for Palestinians. Maybe that is beyond the means of either leader. If so, there could be fallback objectives of an agreement in principle on borders for the Palestinian state in return for an agreed process for meeting Israeli security concerns or even a partial Israeli withdrawal in exchange for a practical and demonstrated approach on security.

Regardless of the objective, be it an agreement on the core issues in principle or a lesser agreement on land and security and an ongoing process of negotiations, both leaders need to feel empowered to take a leap. Psychologically and politically, it will be difficult for them to do so if they cannot give their publics a reason to take a second look at peacemaking. The more the Israeli and Palestinian publics believe again in peacemaking, the more the leaders will feel they can make concessions and have their publics accept them.

The only way to get the publics to look again at peacemaking is for each side to take steps that are politically possible in their own domestic context and still meaningful to the other side. For example, although dismantling terrorist infrastructure is beyond the capability and will of the Palestinian

Authority at this stage, it could launch a systematic public campaign against incitement against Israel in the Palestinian media, schools, and mosques. The Israeli public would see this and note that something was changing. For their part, the Israelis will not take down checkpoints, but they could dramatically ease movement through them just by opening all the lanes within each checkpoint. Similarly, they could also freeze settlement activity in settlements that are adjacent to Palestinian cities, towns, and villages. Each of these moves would be seen by the Palestinian public, who would know that something was changing, that negotiations were having an effect after all.

These politically possible means could be employed this year to change the psychology of both publics. They represent important starting points, but security must also be addressed. Without something practical happening on security, it will be difficult to negotiate even an agreement on principles. Set your sights too high, and nothing will happen. Instead, a process must be started on security. Why not get the Israeli military and Palestinian security forces to reestablish a joint working group on security? All joint efforts on security stopped in 2001 as the intifada was transformed into a war.

The Israeli military, many of whose officers accepted the Oslo process and worked with Palestinian security forces at the time, felt betrayed by the intifada and does not believe that Palestinians will ever live up to their security responsibilities. It too must see that Palestinian security forces will not just mouth the slogans of security but act on their obligations. Start with a joint team whose mission is to develop a security plan and have them also agree on the steps for implementing it. If this does not succeed, there will be no agreements; and if it does, the Israeli military's stake and belief in peacemaking will be restored.

Each of these steps, or practical means, could underpin the negotiating process on the core issues and effectively empower the leaders to make compromises. Whether going for the more ambitious objective of a framework agreement or the less ambitious objective of partial agreements with ongoing negotiations, these means will make progress possible and make a contribution to Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Marrying Means and Objectives

Ultimately, statecraft is about setting realistic objectives and knowing how to use means and different forms of leverage to change behaviors. In its last year, the current administration clearly wants to leave a more favorable legacy on Iraq, Iran, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its possible resolution. To do so, it must clarify its objectives and make them more realistic. Should it finally succeed in marrying means and objectives on these issues, the next

administration will inherit a less onerous set of challenges in the Middle East. Statecraft requires clear, not wishful, thinking. The current administration has indulged itself too often with what it wanted to be the case. The next administration will not have that luxury.

Notes

1. Office of the Press Secretary, The White House, "Address by the President to the Nation on the Way Forward in Iraq," September 13, 2007, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/09/20070913-2.html>.
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